DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006

Building strong, healthy communities together

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[1] Formerly called Family and Children Services.

1.0 ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

The accountability report of the Department of Community Services for the year ended March 31, 2006, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against Community Services business plan information for the fiscal year 2005-2006. The reporting of Community Services' outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgements, and opinions by the department's management.

This accountability report is the responsibility of the management of the Department of Community Services and, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the department's business plan for the year.

Judy Streatch
Minister, Department of Community Services

Marian F. Tyson, Q.C.
Deputy Minister, Department of Community Services

2.0 MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

I am pleased to present the Department of Community Services' Accountability Report for the 2005-2006 fiscal year. The annual Accountability Report provides a summary of the department's accomplishments in fulfilling its 2005-2006 Business Plan commitments and the results achieved in meeting its performance targets.

A number of significant activities were initiated or completed over the last year, consistent with the department's ongoing commitment to provide a sustainable social service system that promotes the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve.

This report outlines the department's progress to date, and is a valuable tool in the department's efforts to provide the best service possible.

Sincerely,

Judy Streatch
Minister, Department of Community Services

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The Annual Accountability Report for the Department of Community Services reports on the progress achieved by the department towards the goals, priorities, performance measures and financial targets established in the 2005-2006 Business Plan. The 2005-2006 Business Plan is available on Community Services' website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/publications.html.

In establishing its priorities, the department was guided by its mission statement and strategic goals:

MISSION

The Department of Community Services is committed to a sustainable social service system that promotes the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve.

This will be achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership, and collaboration with our partners.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- strengthen the capacity of individuals and families to participate in their communities, achieve their full potential, and assume responsibility for addressing their own needs
- build and maintain a well managed, capable, responsive, and sustainable social service system
- create an integrated, client focused, quality service delivery system
- strengthen service provider relationships and leverage opportunities for collaboration
- develop and demonstrate leadership in the continuous pursuit of excellence
- foster a competent and committed workforce through appreciation and support for individuals and teamwork

3.1 REPORT STRUCTURE

This report is organized into four main sections. Section 4 outlines the department's progress and accomplishments against the priorities identified in the 2005-2006 Business Plan. Section 5

outlines additional accomplishments that were not identified in the 2005-2006 Business Plan. Section 6 provides a summary of the financial results for fiscal year. The final section, Section 7, provides details regarding performance measures and the results achieved.

4.0 PRIORITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Below is a summary of the progress and accomplishments of the Department of Community Services in meeting 2005-2006 Business Plan priorities.

4.1 EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE

STANDARDIZED CORE TRAINING

During the Dialogue with the Deputy Minister sessions in 2004-2005, Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) staff identified the need for more focused program specific training. This was brought forward as a business plan priority for 2005-2006.

In 2005-2006, a core training program was developed and delivered to ESIA staff in all four regions. Training focused on policy, case planning, system management, and consistent policy application for program delivery. This training provided staff with the direction and guidance to provide appropriate, affordable, and responsive services to meet the changing needs of clients.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES EVALUATION

The number of individuals receiving income assistance has been declining for about a decade and the profile of clients that remain on the case load is changing. Clients now tend to have multiple barriers to employment, making it more difficult for them to find and maintain employment.

In 2004-2005, the department developed an evaluation framework for the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program. The first priority, as outlined in the 2005-2006 Business Plan, was an evaluation of Employment Support Services. The focus of the evaluation was to examine the current range of Employment Support Services and the delivery of these services.

During 2005-2006, the data gathering phase of the Employment Support Services evaluation was completed. The methodology used included multiple sources of evidence, including focus groups, a client telephone survey, key informant interviews, a staff internet survey, workshops, and an examination of relevant literature and models of delivery used in other jurisdictions. Participants included ESIA staff and clients, third party providers, other government departments, and advocacy groups.

The department now has a comprehensive data set of the employment support client caseload and their needs. This wealth of information will help inform program design and policy development, bringing fresh insights based on an objective point of view.

Income Assistance Personal Allowance and Shelter Rates

For the second consecutive year, the department increased the Income Assistance Personal Allowance Rate. A Personal Allowance is provided to eligible adult recipients for food and other basic personal needs. As of October 2005, the monthly Personal Allowance Rate increased by $6 from $184 to $190. In addition, monthly Shelter Rates were increased by $25 for a single person in a boarding situation, and by $50 for a single employable person in a rent/own situation.

4.2 Housing Services

Affordable Housing Program

The Affordable Housing Program Agreement was signed between the Province of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada in September 2002. Under the first phase of the Agreement, a total of $37.26 million was cost-shared on a 50/50 basis between the federal government, and the province and its partners. In March 2005, the province signed a second Affordable Housing Agreement. This resulted in an additional federal/provincial investment of $18.9 million.

In accordance with the terms of the agreement and the business plan priority, Phase I funds of $37.26 million were fully committed as of March 31, 2006. This investment made possible the preservation or creation of just over 900 additional affordable housing units. These units are located across the province and are targeted to low to moderate income households.

Investments will continue under Phase II of the Agreement. Phase II funding of $18.9 million will be invested over the next three years.

4.3 Family and Community Supports

Early Learning and Early Childhood Development Initiatives

The federal government's commitment to a five-year child care plan ceased with the change in government in January 2006. As a result, Nova Scotia has had to revisit its plan on the basis that the previous commitment to long-term federal funding for child care will cease effective March 2007.

Federal investments prior to 2005-2006 included funding provided through the Early Childhood Development Communique of 2000 and the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care of 2003.

To fulfill its 2005-2006 business plan priority, the department invested in the following Early Learning and Early Childhood Development initiatives:

Licensed Child Care Centres

- An additional 590 licensed child care spaces were created.
- Just over $4.0 million was distributed to 220 full day licensed child care centres for the recruitment and retention of early childhood staff. Early childhood staff throughout the province were surveyed with respect to recruitment, retention and training. This information is being used to develop a Recruitment and Retention Strategy.
- A grant of $350,000 was made available to Early Intervention Nova Scotia to support the Partnerships for Inclusion project. The objective of this project is to support the inclusion of children with special needs in licensed child care centres through a quality enhancement process. The Partnership for Inclusion Program is currently in effect in 27 licensed child-care centres. As of the end of March 2006, a total of 105 centres have participated in this voluntary project.

Family Resource Centres

- Early Language and Learning grants were provided to Family Resource Centres for early language, emergent literacy, and cognitive development programs. Grants with a total value of $890,000 were distributed to centres across the province.
- $340,000 in funding was provided to Family Resource Centres for the provision of parent education and support programs.
- A provincial Parent Education Strategy Advisory Committee with departmental and Family Resource Centre representatives and other specialists was formed in the spring 2005. The parent education vision and mission have been established and work continues on the development of strategic directions with specific goals and objectives.

Other Community Investment & Involvement

- $650,000 was provided to non-profit community-based agencies with a focus on child care information and support for parents and child care providers.

- Early Childhood Education grants totaling approximately $1.0 million were provided to early childhood training institutions in 2005-2006 to provide opportunities for early childhood education pre-service and in service training.

- As part of the department's commitment to ensuring quality care, consultation sessions were held in the summer of 2005 with parents and members of the early childhood sector. The consultation included 20 sessions, surveys, and written submissions with over 2,600 participants.

Child Care Subsidy Review

A multi-year child care subsidy review was initiated in 2004-2005. The goal of the review was to develop a program that would provide as many eligible low income families as possible with a subsidy while being fair to child care centres.

In 2005-2006, the Child Care Subsidy Program Review Working Group identified recommendations related to funding for licensed child care, income eligibility criteria, and the utilization of subsidized spaces. These recommendations informed the development and implementation of Nova Scotia's Early Learning and Child Care Plan.

Adoption Re-Design

In 2005-2006, the department made further improvements to the Domestic Adoption Program as part of adoption re-design initiative. Work continued on the development of a new adoption manual which incorporated pre-adoption services. Applicable child welfare policies were reviewed and revised, and a pre-service curriculum for prospective adoptive parents and a Foster Care Resource System were implemented.

Volunteer Initiative

Working in collaboration with representatives of Family Resource Centres, the department continues to promote volunteerism within this sector. During 2005-2006, a Family Resource Centre volunteer recruitment and recognition plan, brochure and poster aimed at parents, seniors, retirees, youth, students, families, and organizations were rolled out during National Volunteer Week. Family Resource Centres, as part of developing a training strategy in volunteer management, completed a needs assessment and participated in a two day workshop on volunteer management.

Child Welfare - Improving Services for Children and Families

Strengthening the child welfare delivery system is a multi-year initiative of the department. In 2004-2005, work commenced on four projects: the child protection on-call system, foster and adoption services, placement services, and opportunities for shared services between the province and community based Child Welfare Agencies.

In 2005-2006, a Joint Child Welfare Steering Committee with Children's Aid Society Presidents, was established by the Minister, under the leadership of the Assistant Deputy Minister. The Steering Committee completed its review of Nova Scotia's child welfare services and on January 12, 2006, released the *Improving Services for Children and Families Report.* The report is based on the work completed on the following four projects:

- The on-call project gathered and reviewed client, financial, legal, legislative, and human resource data associated with child protection on-call services. The recommendations included the establishment of a provincial after hours system, to be integrated with the current after hours service in the Central Region.

- The foster and adoption project completed a review of the jurisdictional barriers associated with the current mixed public/private-agency model. These barriers impact the delivery of foster and adoption services in Nova Scotia. Four options for the redesign of foster care services and to improve the home study process were submitted.

- The placement project included a proposal for a new model of placement services, a consolidation of coordination and admissions functions, as well as an accountability framework including annual service contracts. Over 50 people participated in this project, generating many additional recommendations that will be considered by the department during the implementation phase.

- In addition, financial, administrative, and technological support services common to agencies and the province were reviewed. Recommendations included the standardization of financial accounting software and shared telephone and stockroom services.

4.4 SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

RENEWAL PROJECT

Services for Persons with Disabilities is a voluntary program that provides residential and day programs for adults with intellectual/physical disabilities and/or long-term mental illness.

In response to input from the consultations which took place in 2004, the program has been undergoing a complete review and redesign. The goal is to develop a modern, fair, responsive and sustainable support system that will enable persons with disabilities to have opportunities to participate as healthy, safe citizens in their communities.

In 2005-2006, consistent with the business plan priorities, three new support programs for persons with disabilities were developed: Direct Family Support, Independent Living, and Alternative Family Support.

- Phase-in of the new Direct Family Support Program began. In addition, work commenced with the Department of Health, to re-assess In Home Support clients for possible admission to Direct Family Support. The reassessment will help determine which supports best meets the needs of these clients.

- The consultation phase for the Independent Living Support Program[2] (ILSP) was completed in April 2005. The policy work for a province-wide ILSP for persons with disabilities was completed in June 2005. The program was implemented in the Eastern Region in January 2006.

- Jurisdictional research was conducted, and consultations with staff and other stakeholders were held to inform the development of an Alternative Family Support Program. The program will be implemented in April 2006.

- In addition, an Assessment Instrument Pilot Project for persons with disabilities was undertaken in Central and Western Regions. The project involved training sessions on the use of the assessment tools and the completion of 400 client assessments. A final report with recommendations on long-term use of these assessment tools was prepared at the conclusion of the pilot. The department will be working on the implementation of the new assessment tools during 2006-2007.

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[2]Based on feedback received from staff and stakeholder consultations, the Supported Apartment Program was renamed to the Independent Living Support Program (ILSP).

Adult Day Programs Review

In February 2006, the department completed a review of 28 Adult Service Centers. The review included an assessment of the programs provided, and the identification of barriers and gaps in services. A discussion paper will be released to the public in 2006-2007 outlining the review process and the recommendations for change.

Wheel Chair Recycling Demonstration Project

A Wheelchair Recycling Demonstration Project was launched in June 2005. The project enables children 18 years of age and younger to access a wheelchair. $500,000 was provided to the Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia for the four year project. In 2005-2006, 39 applications for wheelchairs were approved.

4.5 Corporate Initiatives

Social Policy Framework

As outlined in the 2005-2006 business plan, a social policy framework is key to enabling government to respond to the changing needs of Nova Scotians in a coherent and effective manner. The framework would provide a mechanism to ensure that social and economic policy development, planning, and investments go hand-in-hand.

The development of such a framework is a multi-year initiative, requiring ongoing support and extensive collaboration among government departments. In 2005-2006, as a first step, an options paper was developed to better understand the approach that would best serve Nova Scotia.

Integrated Case Management

In response to growing demands on the department's aging computer systems, Community Services has launched a multi-year *Integrated Case Management (ICM)* project to modernize systems to enable improvement in the way services are delivered to clients. The new technology will help improve work processes and workflow so staff can more easily serve their clients.

In accordance with the priorities described in the business plan, two of a series of improved technology releases were completed in 2005-2006. The two completed releases improve the department's case management and financial management capabilities. Work on a third release is well underway.

CLIENT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

The department remains committed to the provision of quality client services. The following client service improvement initiatives were undertaken in 2005-2006:

- On May 16, 2005, the department launched its new website. The new site features contact and general information about available programs and services, making program information more accessible to the public. A steering committee, with representation from across the department, was formed to oversee future website developments, ensuring the site meets the needs of the public, clients, partners, and staff.

- Additional user-friendly information, in print form, was made available in all departmental offices. Brochures for Employment Support and Income Assistance, Early Childhood Development, Child Welfare, and Housing Services were developed. Brochures for Service for Persons with Disabilities and other services of the department are underway.

- A new, simplified, toll free telephone service enabling access to all departmental offices went live in December 2005 following the rollout of the department's telephone protocols.

- A client satisfaction survey was developed. The survey will enable the department to establish benchmarks and to focus its efforts on areas of importance to clients. Data collection will take place in 2006, starting with clients of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program.

- A pilot project to improve appointment scheduling for clients by providing clients with the opportunity to complete an application for service prior to meeting with a caseworker was conducted in Eastern Region. A decision to proceed with province-wide implementation will be informed by the results of the client satisfaction survey.

- A pilot project to enable clients to provide immediate feedback regarding their experience in receiving service and to offer suggestions for improvement was conducted in Cole Harbour, Windsor, Antigonish, New Glasgow, Sydney and Hants County. The pilot was completed in February, 2006. A report on the results was prepared and province-wide implementation is being considered for 2006-2007.

- Draft guidelines for improving the physical appearance of waiting areas were developed and recommendations have been made regarding changes to external office signage.

Human Resources

The department is committed to creating a supportive work environment in which employees have opportunities to develop their full potential and to use their experience, knowledge, and skills in a way that allows them to make a positive contribution to the department's pursuit of excellence. To fulfill its business plan commitments, a number of human resource initiatives were completed in 2005-2006:

- A departmental Office Security Manual was developed and rolled out to staff. The department's focus is to strengthen office security, ensuring the work environment is safe for staff. In recognition of its outstanding work in workplace violence prevention and office security, the department was awarded the 2006 Outstanding Achievement Award for a Large Organization by the Canadian Association of Safety Engineering.

- As part of the Wellness Strategy, Lunch and Learn sessions were delivered at Head Office, a presentation on Healthy Workplaces was delivered to staff in several offices, and the Infection Control Safe Work Practices were developed and rolled out as part of the North American Occupational Health and Safety Week.

- An Affirmative Action Plan was developed for the Department of Community Services. Key elements of the plan include continued staff training in diversity, and selection processes that reflect essential diversity sensitivities. An accountability system is being developed to monitor the progress of the plan.

- The department is participating in a Succession Planning Pilot Project. This is a pilot project for the Public Service Commission. Phase I of the project included the delivery of training to managers on performance management, career planning, coaching, and mentoring. Phase II will begin in 2006-2007, and will focus on bargaining unit employees and the Housing Authorities.

- A Steering Committee was established to develop a coordinated action plan to address areas of improvement identified in the Employee Surveys. A session was held in November 2005 involving managers in generating suggestions for the development of solutions to the employee survey results. Focus group sessions with staff are planned for 2006-2007 to get a better understanding of the expectations and concerns of staff, and to identify potential solutions. This information will be used to inform and establish future priorities for action.

French Language Initiative

In the Fall of 2004, Bill 111, the *French-language Services Act*, was introduced in the House of Assembly. The Act provides for the delivery of government French-language services thereby

contributing to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and francophone community.

The department is committed to improving and expanding upon the French-language services currently provided. In 2005-2006, the a number of French-language services initiatives were completed:

- French-language child care programs and services were offered in French speaking communities. Support was provided for Acadian early childhood educators and child care expansion grants were awarded to two Acadian child care centres.

- Work began on the exploration of options to provide French speaking therapy to French speaking individuals involved with family violence prevention programs.

- The amount of French-language information available to the public was expanded. As part of the roll out of the Strategic Plan, French-language posters describing the department's vision, mission, strategic goals and outcomes were posted in departmental offices in French speaking communities. Early Learning and Child Care material along with other departmental information was translated into French and made available to the public.

- Université Sainte-Anne, in partnership with the province, has developed a French-Language training program for staff. Five departmental staff participated in the French-language training.

5.0 OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- For the sixth consecutive year, Income Assistance clients received help with the cost of school supplies. Families received an additional $50 for each child 5 to 12 years of age and $100 for each child 13 years and older.

- More than $200,000 in funding was provided to Pendleton Place, an overnight winter shelter that accommodated up to 20 persons per night.

- A student housing pilot program was initiated for low income single parents attending Cape Breton University.

- Under the Women in Supported Housing (WISH) program, up to 24 women received help to move from homelessness to independence.

- A toll-free line was launched to connect families wishing to learn more about adoption.

- Legislation was enacted that allows children in permanent care to be adopted while maintaining contact with birth parents or other relatives.

- A three year Strategic Plan was completed and rolled out to staff across the province.

6.0 FISCAL RESULTS

Department of Community Services Estimated and Actual Expenses For the Year Ending March 31, 2006	Estimate 2005-2006 ($thousands)	Actual 2005-2006 ($thousands)
Net Program Expenses	716,174	711,464
Salaries and Benefits	65,799	61,312
Tangible Capital Assets - Capital Purchases	3,000	2,747
Funded Staff (FTE's)	1,141	1,093

7.0 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

This section provides detailed information on the outcomes and measures of each of the department's four core business areas:

- EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE
- HOUSING SERVICES
- FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS
- SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Some measures have been refined to better reflect the desired outcomes of the department's services and programs. Changes are noted at the end of the document.

7.1 CORE BUSINESS AREA: EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE (ESIA)

The focus of Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) is to provide assistance for individuals and families in their efforts to become self-sufficient. Several interrelated performance measures are used to help track progress toward this outcome.

Three of the measures - average monthly ESIA caseload; percentage of ESIA cases with wage income; and Income Assistance as a percentage of total household income - provide an overview of self-sufficiency and have been grouped and discussed in part A below.

Two additional measures - ESS clients securing employment and ESS clients supported to attend an educational/training program - provide an indication of the success of the Employment Support Services Program in addressing the employment-related needs of clients. These are discussed in part B.

A: SELF-SUFFICIENCY

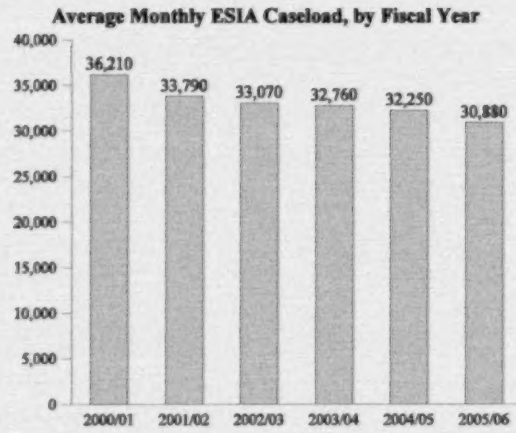
Average Monthly ESIA Caseload[1]

What does this measure tell us?

This measure represents the number of low income Nova Scotia households dependent, in whole or in part, on income assistance to meet their basic needs. It is an average of the number of households per month in receipt of income assistance.

Where are we now?

In 2005-2006, over 40,000 clients were served, at some point during the year, by the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program. This translated into an average monthly caseload of 30,880. As depicted in the accompanying chart, the average monthly caseload has been trending steadily downward, falling from 36,210 cases in 2000-2001 to 30,880 in 2005-2006, a reduction of 15 percent.



During the most recent fiscal year (2005-2006), the average monthly caseload fell from 32,250 to 30,880, a decline of over 4 percent. This surpasses the target of maintaining the caseload at or below the 2002-2003 base-year level (33,790).

Continued growth in the economy has contributed to the caseload reduction over the past several years. In addition, programs like the Transitional Pharmacare Program and the Nova Scotia Child Benefit Program assist people in making a successful transition to the labour force.

Percentage of ESIA Cases with Wage Income[2]

Attachment to the labour force on a full or part-time basis reduces reliance on income assistance and moves people closer to independence. Participation in the labour market provides people with increasing earnings opportunities and greater income security.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure provides an indication of the employment activity of all clients in receipt of income assistance. Using the monthly average for the fiscal year, the measure shows the percentage of income assistance recipients with wage income. An increase in the proportion of cases with wage income indicates a reduced dependency on income assistance.

Where are we now?

In 2005-2006, an average of 2,900 cases, or 9.3 percent of the average monthly income assistance caseload of 30,880, reported a wage income. This is down slightly from the 2004-2005 figure, but needs to be taken in the context of the overall caseload reduction of 5,330 cases in the past five years, and the increasing challenges faced by clients remaining on the caseload. Many of these cases have education and training barriers and/or health and disability issues that either

limit job opportunities, or prevent people from holding full-time employment. It is more challenging for these individuals to move into the work force, which is reflected in the percentage of recipients earning wage income:

Income Assistance Cases with Wage Income		
2003-2004 (Base Year)	2004-2005	2005-2006
10.4%	9.7%	9.3%

The table below illustrates one of the more challenging barriers faced by many clients. It shows that in comparison with the Nova Scotian population, ESIA clients have lower levels of education. For example, 31 percent of the Nova Scotia population has not completed high-school, compared with 63 percent for the ESIA caseload.

Highest Level of Educational Attainment ESIA Caseload, Fiscal Year 2005-2006		
Educational Attainment	**ESIA caseload**	**NS population**
Less than Grade 9	25%	9%
Grade 9 to 11	38%	22%
Secondary complete	27%	15%
Some post-secondary	10%	54%

Income Assistance as a Percentage of Total Household Income[3]

What does this measure tell us?

This measure details the proportion of income assistance payments in relation to total household income received by recipients from all sources (such as wages, pensions, family support payments, employment insurance and income assistance). The lower the percentage, the less dependent households are on income assistance to meet their needs.

Where are we now?

In 2005-2006, income assistance payments represented 69.7 percent of the total household income for all individuals in receipt of income assistance. This percentage has remained stable over the past three years.

Income Assistance as a % of Total Household Income		
2003-2004 (Base Year)	2004-2005	2005-2006
69.6%	70.4%	69.7%

The target was to decrease this percentage by 1 percent annually. Although the rate declined in 2005-2006, it did so at a slower pace than targeted, owing in large part to upward pressure on financial support for special needs.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The department wants to strengthen the capacity of individuals and families to participate in their communities, achieve their full potential, and assume responsibility for addressing their own needs.

More specifically for 2006-2007, we want to:

- continue the downward trend in the income assistance caseload, and in so doing meet the target of not exceeding the 2002-2003 base-year level of 33,790
- ensure the percentage of income assistance clients with wage income does not drop below 10.4 percent, consistent with the base level established in 2003-04
- reduce income assistance as a percentage of total household income by 1 percent per annum.

How do we plan to achieve these targets?

To achieve these targets, the department is continually assessing and monitoring the employment readiness of clients. Employment barriers are being addressed through a variety of programs including literacy and upgrading as well as specialized courses assisting people to acquire job specific skills. The continued growth in the Nova Scotia economy and resulting job opportunities will be key to achieving these results.

Specific strategies to enable clients to prepare for, enter and remain in the labour market include:

- continued support through employment-related supports such as child care and transportation, designed to assist clients enter the labour force
- prescription drug coverage (Pharmacare) for recipients leaving income assistance for work for up to one-year to reduce this barrier to employment

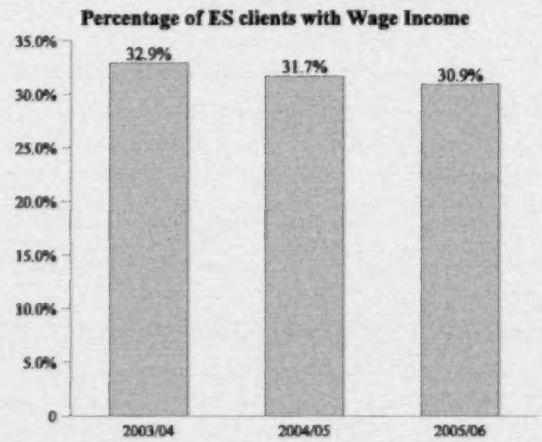
- other supports like the Nova Scotia Child Benefit which ensure low income families have stable child benefits, and subsidized child care
- One Journey Work and Learn Programs providing opportunities for skills development and direct employment by responding to industry skills shortages
- Educate to Work Program supporting individuals attending the Nova Scotia Community College
- continued partnership with Work Activity programs, providing opportunities for clients to gain skills through these programs
- supporting income assistance clients through the Targeted Wage Subsidy Program, with job development services and employment readiness programs.

The department will also be following up on the findings of the Employment Support Services evaluation to ensure that appropriate, affordable, and responsive services are available to meet the changing needs of clients.

B: Addressing Employment Related Needs

Percentage of Eligible Income Assistance Recipients who have Secured Full or Part-Time Employment

Employment Support Services (ESS) helps eligible people on income assistance to become more self-sufficient. Involvement in employment activities such as volunteer or part-time work or career planning not only reduces reliance on income assistance but also enables individuals and families to achieve a greater degree of self-reliance and independence.



What does this measure tell us?

This measure indicates the percentage of eligible income assistance recipients participating in Employment Support Services (ESS) who have earnings from full or part-time employment.

Where are we now?

In 2005-2006, approximately 31 percent of ESS clients secured full or part-time employment over the course of that year. Some of these clients have exited the Income Assistance Program, while others continue to require some income assistance and employment related supports. Actual results achieved for 2005-2006 represents a decrease of just under 1 percent from the previous year, slightly short of the target set of 33 percent.[4]

Percentage of Eligible Income Assistance Recipients Supported to Attend an Educational Program

Many income assistance recipients are involved in programs that will enhance their skills and personal potential. Individuals may enroll in a variety of programs including literacy and upgrading programs as well as specialized courses assisting people to acquire job specific skills. Participation in training and employment activities gives people an opportunity to become more self-sufficient.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure indicates the percentage of individuals on the Employment Support Services' caseload who are participating in approved education and training programs. By providing these educational opportunities, the department is helping to reduce a significant barrier to employment in many of our clients.

Where are we now?

As part of the department's continued efforts to better monitor its programs and their delivery, the Department of Community Services is restructuring its data gathering systems. Through that process, the department has been challenged to revisit previously reported figures. In the case of this performance measure, inconsistencies in previous and current data have been highlighted that require further exploration before being released.

At this point, data indicates that over 5,900 interventions were made involving approximately 9,900 ESS clients.

Where do we want to be in the future?

For 2006-2007, the department will report on percentage of eligible income assistance recipients supported to attend educational/training programs.

7.2 CORE BUSINESS AREA: HOUSING SERVICES [5]

Housing is a basic need, fundamental to personal well being, and the base upon which to build healthy and sustainable communities. Housing Services provides safe affordable housing to people across the province and uses its existing buildings, and its technical and financial resources to support communities. The key result desired is to ensure that more households in Nova Scotia have access to safe, appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing.

Percentage of Public Housing Budget Allocated to Maintenance and Capital Improvement of the Province's Public Housing Portfolio

The department established a benchmark of allocating 20 percent of the annual public housing budget to maintenance and capital improvements. Like privately owned housing in Nova Scotia, public housing stock is aging and there are significant maintenance issues that require a steady financial commitment in order to ensure public housing tenants live in safe and healthy housing.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure tells us the percentage of the annual public housing budget spent on maintenance and capital improvements to the public housing stock of approximately 12,500 dwelling units.

Where are we now?

Maintenance and capital improvement expenditures[3] in 2005-2006 were 25.3 percent of the public housing budget. This level of expenditure enabled completion of previously deferred maintenance items. Work undertaken included interior and exterior upgrades and the installation of new generators and elevators in some seniors' buildings. The average rate of expenditure over the past four years now stands at 21.6 percent, exceeding the 2000-2001 base year figure of 20.3 percent.

Percentage of Public Housing Budget Allocated to Maintenance and Capital Improvement of the Province's Public Housing Portfolio						
2000-01	**2001-02**	**2002-03**	**2003-04**	**2004-05**	**2005-06**	**6 Year Ave.**
20.3%	19.4%	18.9%	22.7%	23.4%	25.3%	21.6%

[3]Maintenance and capital improvement work does not encompass aging in place initiatives such as making adaptations for frail seniors and property enhancements.

Where do we want to be in the future?

The department's target is to maintain the rate of investment in ongoing maintenance and improvements at a minimum of 20 percent. Maintaining the budget allocation at 20 percent, is an ongoing challenge:

- annual federal subsidies have been capped at 1995-96 levels
- inflationary increases in operating costs such as home heating oil, electricity, wages, and building materials exceed increases in revenues from rents.

To maintain this level of investment in ongoing repair and maintenance, the department continually looks for ways to economize on operating and administrative expenses and explore revenue generating opportunities.

Affordable Housing Agreement Funds Committed

What does the measure tell us?

Providing housing options to low and moderate income Nova Scotians is essential for their well-being and that of their families, and for the development of sustainable communities. This measure indicates how much of the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Program Agreement funds have been committed to creating or preserving affordable homes in Nova Scotia.

Where are we now?

Phase I Affordable Housing funds of $37.26 million were fully committed as of March 31, 2006. Just over 900 affordable housing units have been preserved or created under the Phase I Agreement. These units are located across the province and are targeted to low to moderate income households.

Where do we want to be in the future?

In 2006-2007, the department will begin to deliver Phase II funds of $18.9 million. This funding will be fully committed by 2010 and go toward the creation or preservation of approximately 250 dwelling units. Draft financial and program delivery plans have been prepared.

Health of the Cooperative Housing Portfolio

What does the measure tell us?

This measure reports the percentage of cooperative housing organizations who achieve a ranking

of Level I or a High Level II based on an annual assessment of their financial, democratic, and physical condition.[6]

The department is implementing the Cooperative Ranking Model to assess and monitor the health of the Cooperative Housing Portfolio. Cooperative housing organizations in Nova Scotia provide approximately 1,670 self-contained dwelling units. The Ranking Model provides an overview of the Cooperative Housing Portfolio and as an ongoing monitoring tool, assists the department in its management of cooperative housing. Cooperatives are ranked as a Level I , II or III; with Level I being the healthiest, and Level III being considered a project "in difficulty".

Where are we now?

There are 80 subsidized cooperatives in the Cooperative Housing Portfolio. To date, the Cooperative Ranking Model has been used to assess the health of 85 percent of the portfolio - 68 of the cooperatives. Information on the remaining 12 cooperatives is still being collected.

Preliminary results indicate that 63 percent of the cooperatives are healthy and do not pose a risk. 13 percent of the assessed cooperatives are "at risk" and 24 percent are projects "in difficulty".

Cooperative Ranking	Results
Level I	35%
High Level II	28%
Low Level II	13%
Level III	24%

Where do we want to be in the future?

Future targets and strategies to address the number of cooperatives at risk (Low Level II) and projects "in difficulty" (Level III) will be determined after all the baseline information is collected and analyzed.

7.3 CORE BUSINESS AREA: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS [7]

Family and Community Supports focuses on the provision of safe and nurturing environments for children to enable them to develop to their full potential. The presence and opportunity for appropriate experiences in the early years in the home, the care environment, and the neighbourhood can promote optimum development in all areas - learning, language, social, emotional, behavioural, and physical. A broad range of community-based, prevention-oriented

supports for both children and families is available.

Two key outcomes are:

- a stable placement for children in care
- stable, quality child care.[4]

Number of Children in Permanent Care and Custody Placed for Adoption

Research has shown that a secure stable family environment is an important factor in healthy child development. Where a child is in permanent care and custody and legally free for adoption, it is in the child's best interest to be placed for adoption as quickly as possible.

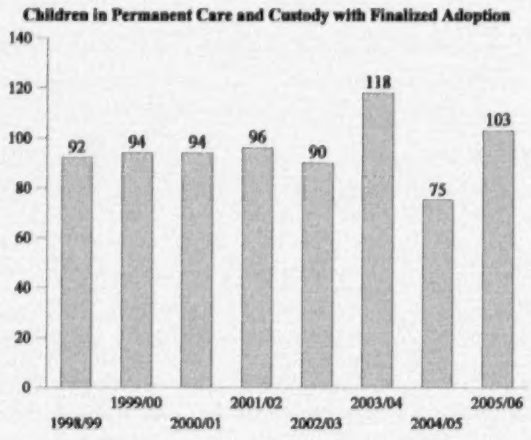
What does this measure tell us?

This measure reports the number of adoptions successfully completed. The number of children in permanent care and custody placed for agency adoption does not include the number of adoptions in progress.

Where are we now?

Data over the past eight years shows variations in the number of agency adoptions, ranging from a high of 118 agency adoptions to a low of 75. The average number of agency adoptions over the past eight years is 95.

In 2005-2006, 103 agency adoptions were finalized, slightly short of the target of 118. The 2005-2006 results compare very favourably to the prior year's result of 75 – a 37 percent increase. The increase in the number of adoptions was helped by the investment in new positions to support adoption training and assessment.



Where do we want to be in the future?

In 2006-2007, the department is working on several initiatives to increase the number of children adopted, including improving public awareness/recruitment, improving service delivery and standards, mandatory training for applicants, implementing internal statistical reporting, and

implementing the recommendations of the Child Welfare Steering Committee.[5]

Performance Measure: Children in Care and Custody (per 1,000 children 20 years of age and under)

Every child deserves a home where they are safe and nurtured. Children in care may experience poorer life outcomes than children raised in their own families. The department is committed to ensuring children are taken into care only when necessary, and that children whenever appropriate, are reunited with their families as soon as possible, or placed in another nurturing permanent home.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure is an indicator of the overall stability of family home environments.

Where are we now?

According to Statistics Canada there were 228,354 children and young adults under the age of 20 in Nova Scotia in 2005-2006.[6] The number of children in care and custody as of March 31, 2006 was 1,160. This means that for every 1,000 children and young adults in province under 20, there were just over 5 in permanent care and custody. This is a slight increase over the target of 4.6 and the base year (2003-2004) results.

Rate of Children in Care and Custody		
2003-04 (Base Year)	**2004-2005**	**2005-2006**
4.6	5	5.1

Where do we want to be in the future?

The target remains the same – to maintain or decrease the rate of children in permanent care and custody of the Minister. To help accomplish this target, the department will promote the use of alternative services such as family group counseling, outreach services from residential facilities, mediation, respite, and in-home services.

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[5]For additional information on the recommendations of the Child Welfare Steering Committee see section 4.3, Priority: Child Welfare - Improving Services for Children and Families.

[6]Statistics Canada, 2001 Census Population, Catalogue #95Fo300xcb2001006.

Percentage of Children that Come into Care and Custody of the Total Number Receiving Protection Services

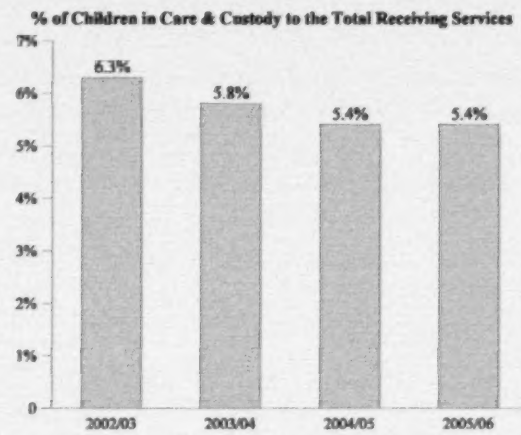
Child Protection Services are brought into a situation when a child is identified as being at risk of abuse or neglect. Children may be placed in care of the Minister on a temporary or permanent basis.

What does this measure tell us?

This measure is an indicator of the outcome of Children Protection Service interventions. It reflects the department's focus on respecting children's need to feel the security of family and community relationships, and recognition of the importance of building family strengths to improve the ability of families to care for their children.

Where are we now?

Over the past two years, the percentage of children coming into care and custody of the total number of children receiving protection services has remained stable, following a two year period of decline. In 2005-2006, 22,626 children received protection services, approximately 5.4 percent of these children were taken into care and custody. 2005-2006 performance surpassed the target, achieving results below the 2002-2003 base year of 6.3 percent.



Where do we want to be in the future?

The goal is to increase the ability of parents to more confidently meet their children's needs through parent education programs. In 2006-2007, the department is working with other government departments and community partners on the development of a collaborative work plan for action.

Number of Spaces in Full-Time Licensed Care Centres

Access to child care is an important resource for working parents of young children and those parents who are pursuing training or employment.

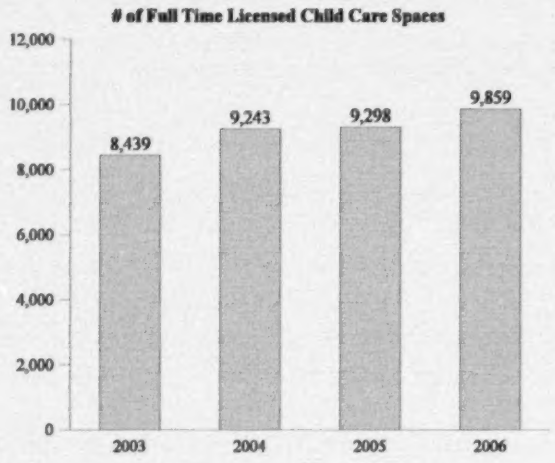
What does this measure tell us?

The number of spaces in full-time licensed child care centres is a measure of the department's

ability to meet the early childhood development needs of children. Quality child care offers an ongoing opportunity for children's learning while providing safe and reliable care that promotes socialization, health, and a child's well-being.

Where are we now?

In 2005-2006, there were 9,859 spaces in full-time licensed child care centres. This represents an increase of 16.8 percent in the number of spaces over the past four years. The target of an additional 400 spaces for 2005-2006 was surpassed with the addition of 561 new spaces.



Where do we want to be in the future?

The target set for 2006-2007 is to increase the number of spaces by 250 or more.

Nova Scotia's Early Learning and Child Care Plan proposes investments in funding for the expansion of licensed child care and family-home child care spaces.

7.4 Core Business Area: Services for Persons with Disabilities

Access to a range of residential supports is key to positive outcomes for clients of the Services for Persons with Disabilities (SPD) Program. The needs of children and adults with disabilities vary; likewise the services needed to support people with disabilities to be independent, safe, and healthy in their communities ranges from minimal to intensive. Across the province, the SPD program provides residential and/or vocational programs for approximately 4,500 clients. Over the course of the past year, the department has undertaken a number of initiatives to enhance the range of residential supports and to make these supports more accessible. The desired outcome is to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to live healthy, safe and independent lives.

Percentage of Adult Clients with Disabilities Receiving Support Services who Remain at Home with their Families

What does this measure tell us?

This measure was introduced in 2005-2006 with the implementation of the Direct Family Support (DFS) Program. The funding offered through this program enables families to support family members with a disability at home, preventing the need for an out-of-home placement. It

provides an indication of the progress made toward improving the continuum of residential support options available to adults with disabilities.

Where are we now?

In 2005-2006, a reporting mechanism for tracking and monitoring the number of clients in the Direct Family Support Program was developed and implemented. As of March 2006, 453 clients 19 years of age and older, representing 11 percent of the program's disabled residential support clients, are now able to remain at home, supported by the Direct Family Support Program.

Where do we want to be in the future?

In 2006-2007, the DFS will be available to clients throughout the province. The target is to expand the program by 100 or more clients. This represents 14 percent of the total number of disabled adult residential support clients.

Starting in 2006-2007, the department will be reporting on two additional measures for Service of Persons with Disabilities:

- percentage of eligible individuals receiving support services in an Alternative Family Support setting

- percentage of eligible individuals receiving supports from the Independent Living Support Program.

CHANGES TO PERFORMANCE MEASURES

1. To reflect activity for the full fiscal year, the ESIA caseload measure was changed from the number of clients at a point in time to the average monthly caseload.

2. To better reflect the full fiscal year's activity, the percentage of ESIA cases with wage income was changed from a point in time to the average monthly percentage of the caseload with wage income.

3. To reflect the full fiscal year's activity, income assistance as a percentage of total household income was changed to represent the percentage of annual income assistance payments to the total annual household income for all income recipients.

4. Previously reported figures for the percentage of eligible income assistance recipients who have secured full or part-time employment have been revised due to improvements in methodology and data collection.

5. The number of homes upgraded through home repair/ home adaptation programs is no longer reported as a performance measure.

6. The percentage of cooperative housing organizations who achieve a ranking of Level I or a High Level II based on an annual assessment of their financial, democratic, and physical condition replaces the percentage of cooperative and non-profit housing organizations that have adequately funded reserves. The Cooperative Housing Ranking Model will provide an improved assessment of the health of the Cooperative Housing Portfolio.

7. One of the measures of Family and Community Supports, the number and percent of trained providers in licensed full day early childhood child care centres, was discontinue in the 2006-2007 business planning process.